

# Healthwatch Tameside report

**Survey data collected  
March 2021 to July 2021**

**Published in March 2022**

Healthwatch Tameside, 95-97 Penny Meadow, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 6EP

[www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk)

@HealthwatchTame



## Introduction

Healthwatch Tameside is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Tameside.

We listen to local people, and gather information about their experiences of using health and social care services.

We use this information to talk to the people who arrange (commission) the services and the people who provide the services. We can influence changes which will make these services better for everyone. If we hear about good practice, we encourage this to be shared. If you tell us about something that could be improved, we will talk to the people in charge about this too.

Any information we are given will remain anonymous. We are careful to share ideas in a way which will not identify any individuals.

During mid-2021 we carried out three surveys - Urgent care, Transport to medical appointments, and Mental and emotional wellbeing. The reports for these surveys can be found at:

- Urgent care - [www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/report/2021-12-07/urgent-care-survey-report-2021](http://www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/report/2021-12-07/urgent-care-survey-report-2021)
- Transport to medical appointments - [www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/report/2021-12-16/transport-medical-appointments-survey-report-2021](http://www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/report/2021-12-16/transport-medical-appointments-survey-report-2021)
- Mental and emotional wellbeing - [www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/report/2021-12-14/mental-and-emotional-wellbeing-survey-report-2021](http://www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/report/2021-12-14/mental-and-emotional-wellbeing-survey-report-2021)

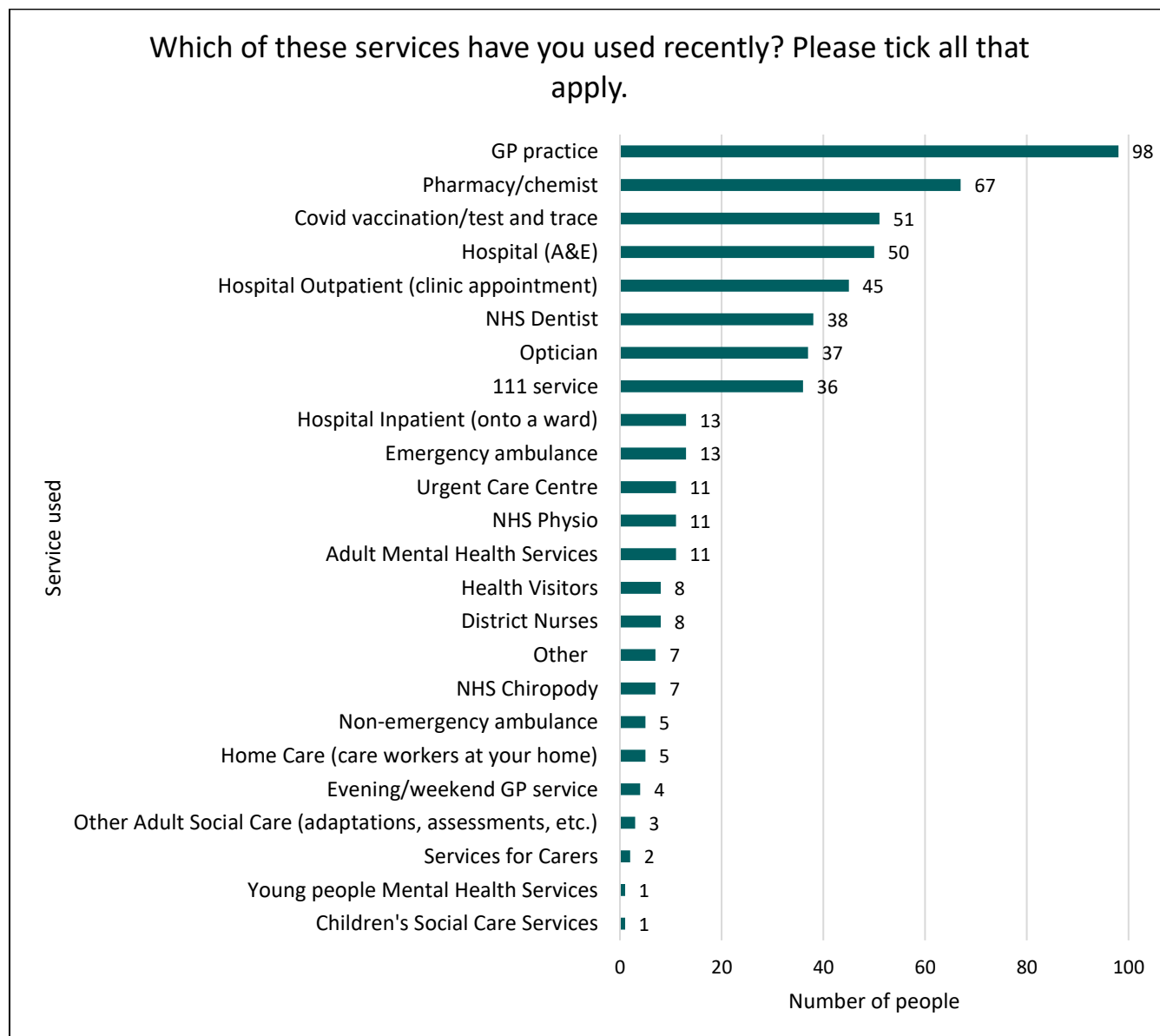
The second part of each survey asked for feedback about using other services. In the above reports, we said we would combine this feedback in a separate report, which is what this new report is about. We are not including information about the demographics questions in this report, as these have already been noted in the above reports. Numbers of people completing each report (and the method of completion they chose) have also been included previously.

It is possible that people who completed the surveys online have completed more than one of the surveys. They may have answered the tick-box question in this report more than once, as the questions are identical in each of the three surveys. The surveys are anonymous therefore we cannot check for this. We have only found one obvious instance (the free-write responses were the same), and have allowed for this in the graphs.

One of the questions about use of other health and care services asks for tick-box responses, and the remaining questions for free-write feedback.

We will show the question with tick-box responses first, followed by the feedback received in the free-write responses.

**Question - Which of these services have you used recently? Please tick all that apply.**



‘Other’ includes an admiral nurse, a community group, community warden, health centre, MacMillan nurse, private hospital, and a stop smoking service.

The other questions included in this report are:

- What were the names of the GP practice, hospital, and/or other providers used?
- What was good about the health and care services you used?
- What could be improved about the health and care services you used?

We will look at the responses to these three questions all together. We will group them by type of service provided and whether the comments are positive or negative.

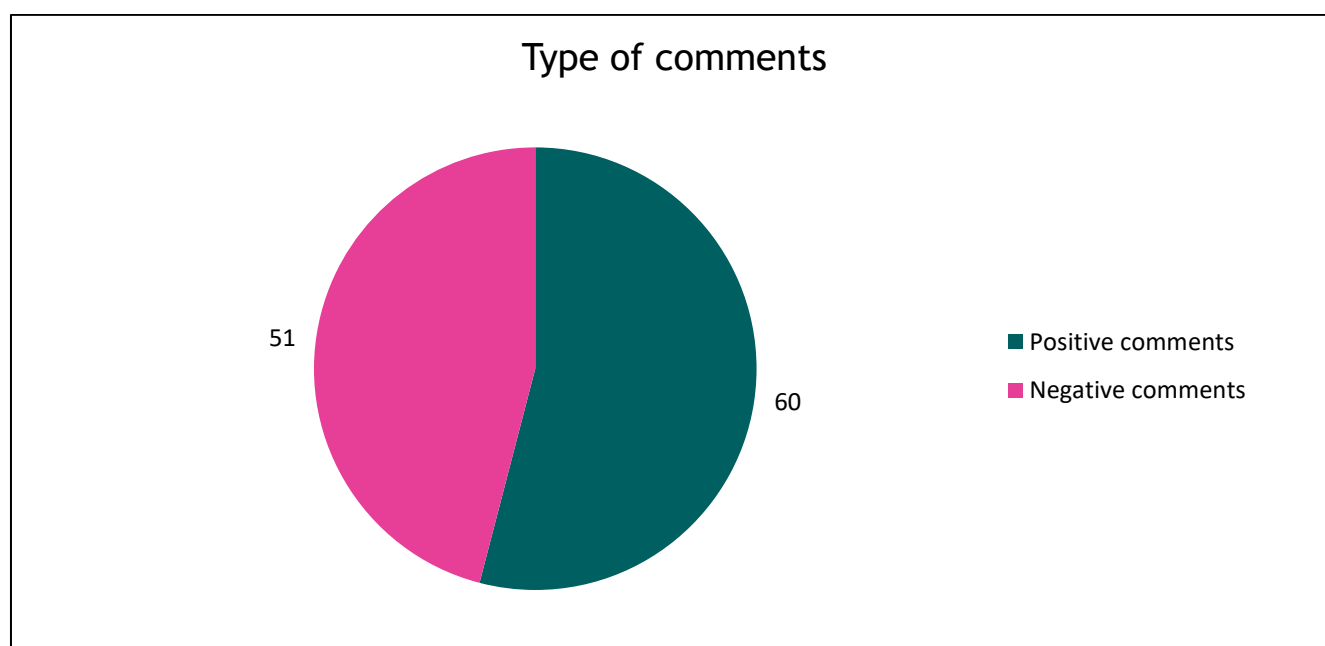
The final question is:

- **Have you delayed asking for medical help with anything, because of the COVID pandemic? Please tell us more. It is important people get symptoms checked out. If you have delayed getting help, and you still have symptoms, have you thought about getting help now?**

Where we have provided lists of positive and negative comments throughout the report, these are words and phrases used in the survey responses.

## GP Practices

Looking at the graph on the previous page, the number of people who had visited a GP practice was greater than any of the other services listed. The feedback about the experience of the visits was mixed, with both positive and negative comments. Some people told us about things that went well, and also things where they thought improvements could be made.



A few of the comments are about practices which are not included in the Tameside and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group area (T & G CCG), including:

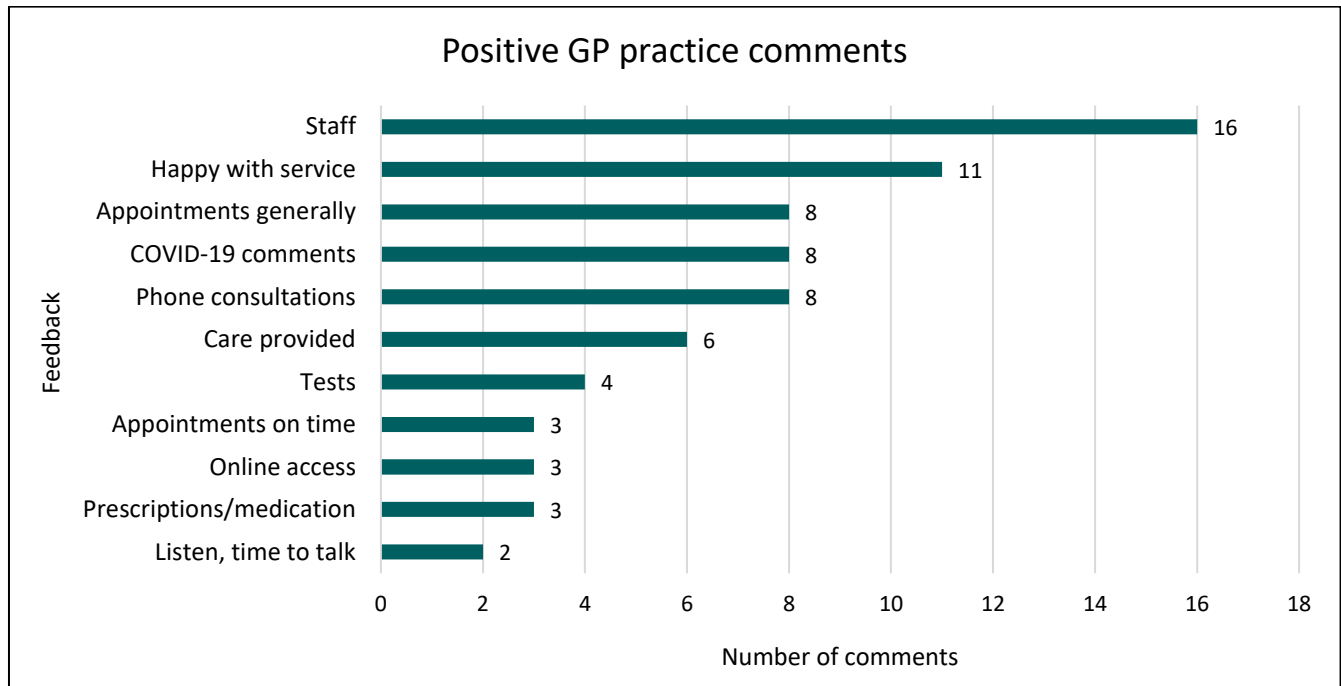
- Practices within Tameside which are part of a practice based outside Tameside.
- Practices just outside the Tameside border which are used by Tameside residents.
- A few responses are from people who do not live in Tameside or Glossop.

For the purposes of this report, all feedback has been included. The comments made about out of area practices are similar to the feedback we hear about our local practices.

Although Glossop/Glossopdale is within the Healthwatch Derbyshire area, healthcare for the residents is currently the responsibility of T & G CCG. We have included all comments about Glossop GP practices.

## Positive comments

Not everyone named their GP practice in their feedback. We will look at the comments split into themes, and not by individual practice.



Within the themes shown in the above graph, the feedback includes comments about:

- **Staff:**

- Caring
- Friendly
- Helpful
- Kind
- Polite
- Reassuring
- Respectful
- Understanding

Helpful staff who answer. They listen well.

- **Happy with service:**

- Excellent service
- Great at answering phone
- No complaints
- Ok
- Peace of mind
- Satisfied
- Service good
- Very good
- Wonderful

We have not had a problem getting to speak to a professional for things we have experienced.

- **Appointments generally:**

- Able to contact doctor
- Efficient
- Follow-up appointment arranged
- Home visits for older patients
- In person appointments as needed
- Really good at getting back to me

- **COVID-19 comments:**

- COVID-19 safety measures
- Doing their best
- Good job under the circumstances
- Organisation of COVID-19 jabs

Everything was Covid safe, which made me feel more comfortable.

- **Phone consultations:**

- Appointments either same day or following day
- Call from relevant staff
- Sending photo if needed

- **Care provided:**

- Advice
- B12 injection service
- Excellent support
- Impressed
- Informative
- Thorough
- Urgent referral

B12 injection fast and efficient service. On time appointment.

- **Tests:**

- Blood pressure
- Blood tests

- **Appointments on time:**

- Prompt
- Wasn't kept waiting

- **Online access:**

- Ask my GP app fantastic
- Repeat prescriptions
- Service for requesting appointment

Very good with online service for requesting appointment, phone call from relevant staff and in person appointments as needed.

- **Prescriptions/medication:**

- Medication prescribed
- Sent prescription to chemist

- **Listen, time to talk:**

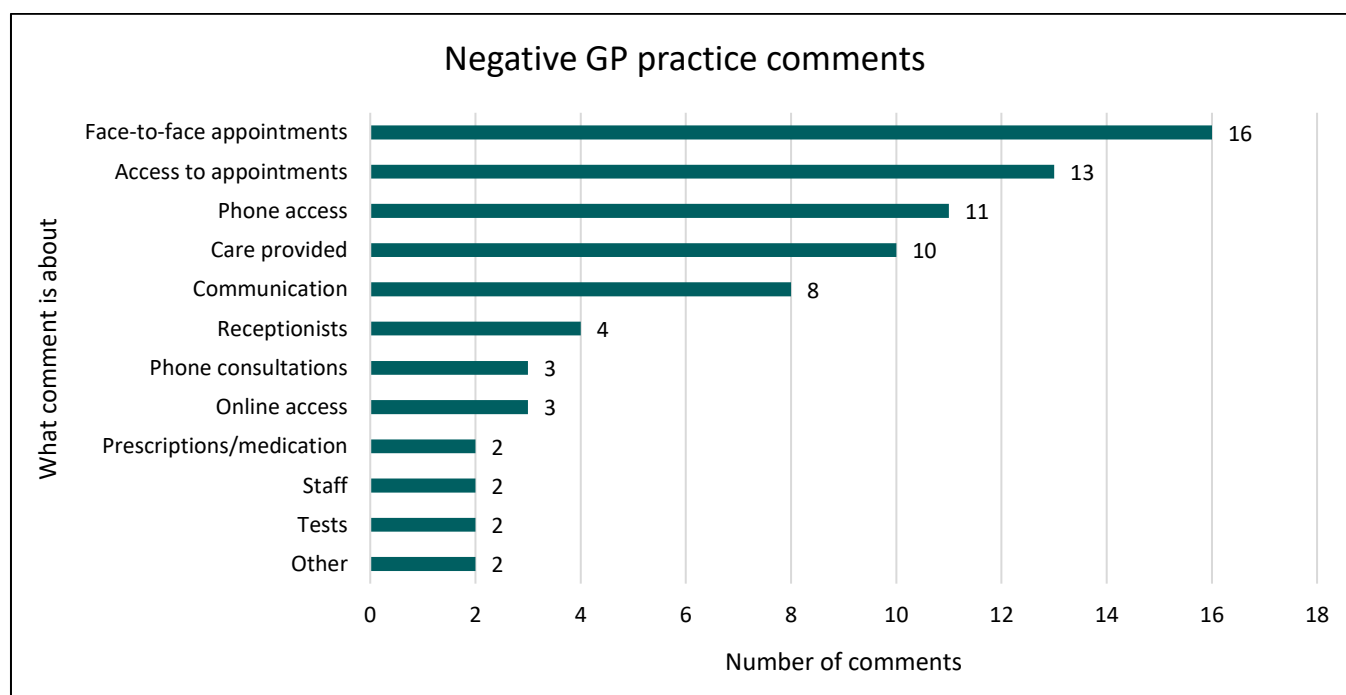
- Good listening
- They listen well

## Positive comments were received about the following practices:

Albion Medical Group, Alexandra Group Medical Practice, Ashton Medical Group, Audenshaw Medical Centre, Awburn House Surgery, Brooke Surgery, Clarendon Medical Centre, Clayton Health Centre, Denton Medical Practice, Donneybrook Medical Centre, Droylsden Medical Practice, Dukinfield Medical Centre, Florence House Medical Practice, Gordon Street Medical Centre, Grosvenor Medical Centre, Guide Bridge Medical Practice, Hattersley Group Practice, Haughton Thornley Medical Centre, HT Practice, King Street Surgery, Lambgates Health Centre, Lockside Medical Centre, Market Street Medical Practice, Medlock Vale Medical Practice, Millbrook Medical Centre, Mossley Medical Practice, Pennine Medical Centre, St Andrews Medical Centre, Simmondley Medical Practice, Staveleigh Medical Centre, Town Hall Surgery, Waterloo Medical Centre, West End Medical Centre.

## Negative comments

As with the positive comments, not everyone named their GP practices. Here are the themes and comments.



Within the themes shown in the above graph, the feedback includes comments about:

- **Face-to-face appointments:**

- Better for some people
- Doctor cannot know things they cannot see
- Preferable to phone consultations
- Triage is necessary but delaying face-to-face appointments
- Wanted to chat about prescriptions but not doing face-to-face
- Why are these not available?

They seem afraid of anyone entering even the hallway.



- **Access to appointments:**

- A total battle to get an appointment
- All appointments gone by the time you get through on the phone
- Better access
- Can take up to 5 weeks to see doctor
- Have complicated what used to be a simple process
- More appointments to be available
- System worse than 10-15 years ago

I have found the changes in the GP service frustrating and off-putting.

- **Phone access:**

- Contact at 8am only is difficult
- Difficult for the elderly
- Does not work for deaf patients
- GP changed phone number without telling me
- Long time waiting in phone queue
- Phone constantly engaged
- Phone not answered
- Slow to answer phone

They could make it easier for me to contact them by phone by using different times of the day other than 8am.

- **Care provided:**

- Anything non-COVID related took a back seat
- GP insistent needed to visit surgery but immobile and couldn't get there
- Impersonal
- Need better information regarding mental health services from GP
- Need personal care
- No consistent GP so don't know medical history
- No follow-up on appointments
- Not helpful
- Nothing good
- Referrals
- See the advanced nurse practitioner who then has to check with GP

Communication is key, and unfortunately, this is very poor

- **Communication:**

- Improve
- Tannoy in surgery hard to hear
- Very poor

- **Receptionists:**

- Abrupt
- Less gatekeeping
- Rude
- Speak more clearly
- Too many questions asked
- Training needed
- Treat patients with respect
- Unhelpful

Whereas some of the receptionists were very good I do believe training in diction should be given to receptionists and for them to speak slowly and clearly (patient with difficulty hearing).

- **Phone consultations:**

- GP rang when she knew I had another appointment and had to wait a week for a call-back
- not always good

- **Online access:**

- Don't use the internet
- No response to online request
- Online form gives options that are nothing to do with the help you need
- Son has to request repeat prescriptions online

Go back in time a little, give personal care. Today everything is computers, why would you want to be a GP and don't see your patients?

- **Prescriptions/medication:**

- Prescription service poor
- Stopped medication as couldn't see GP

- **Staff:**

- Improve care
- Improve empathy
- Lack of passion
- Lack of understanding
- Some (staff) think they know more than the doctors

The reception staff have been rude and unhelpful to my wife and I.

- **Tests:**

- Regular blood tests not up-to-date
- Sample not tested

- **Other:**

- Disabled people having to wait outside
- More consistency needed between practices

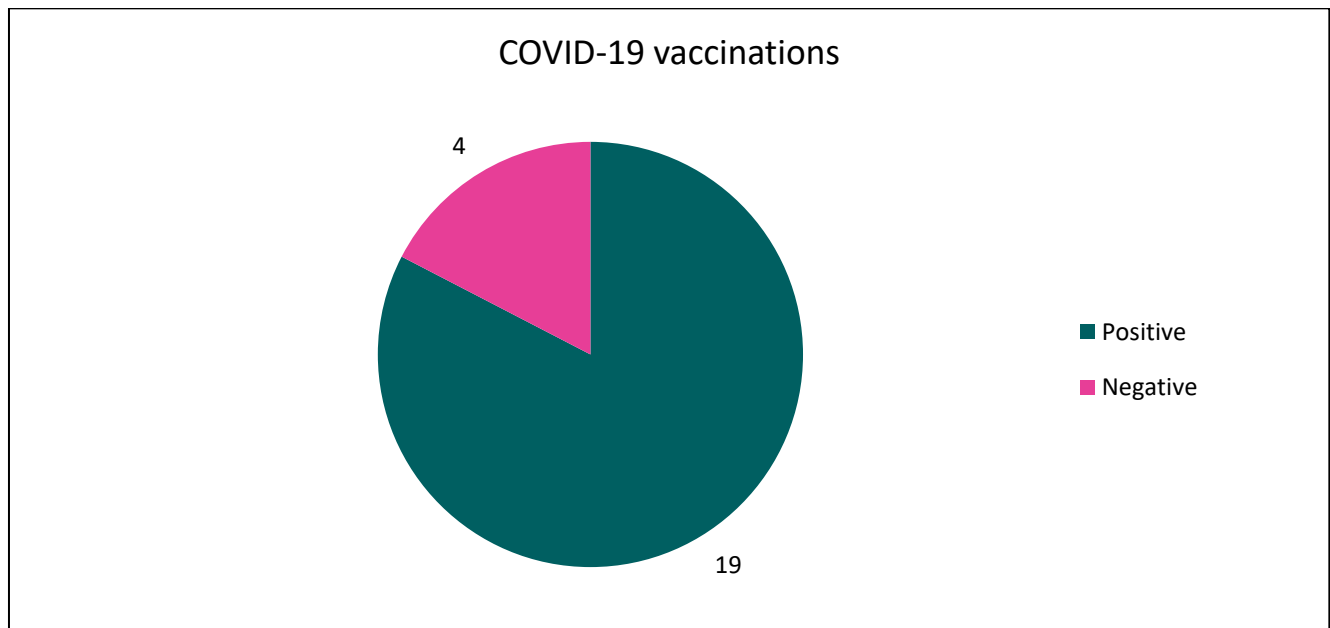
After not testing a sample provided for over 3 days an infection got seriously worse leading to hospital treatment.

The named practices where people felt improvements could be made were:

Albion Medical Group, Alexandra Group Medical Practice, Ashton Medical Group, Awburn House Surgery, Brooke Surgery, Clarendon Medical Centre, Denton Medical Practice, Donneybrook Medical Centre, Droylsden Medical Practice, Dukinfield Medical Centre, Florence House Medical Practice, Gordon Street Medical Centre, Hattersley Group Practice, Haughton Thornley Medical Centre, HT Practice, King Street Surgery, Lambgates Health Centre, Langham House (Oldham), Market Street Medical Practice, Medlock Vale Medical Practice, Millbrook Medical Centre, Millgate Healthcare Partnership, Mossley Medical Practice, Town Hall Surgery.

## COVID-19 vaccinations

People who mentioned receiving their vaccinations were generally positive about the experience.



Comments were received about all the Tameside Primary Care Network (PCN) vaccination sites, and the organisation involved in rolling out the programme. The Etihad stadium was also mentioned and the Darnton Road testing site.

Words used to describe the positive experiences included:

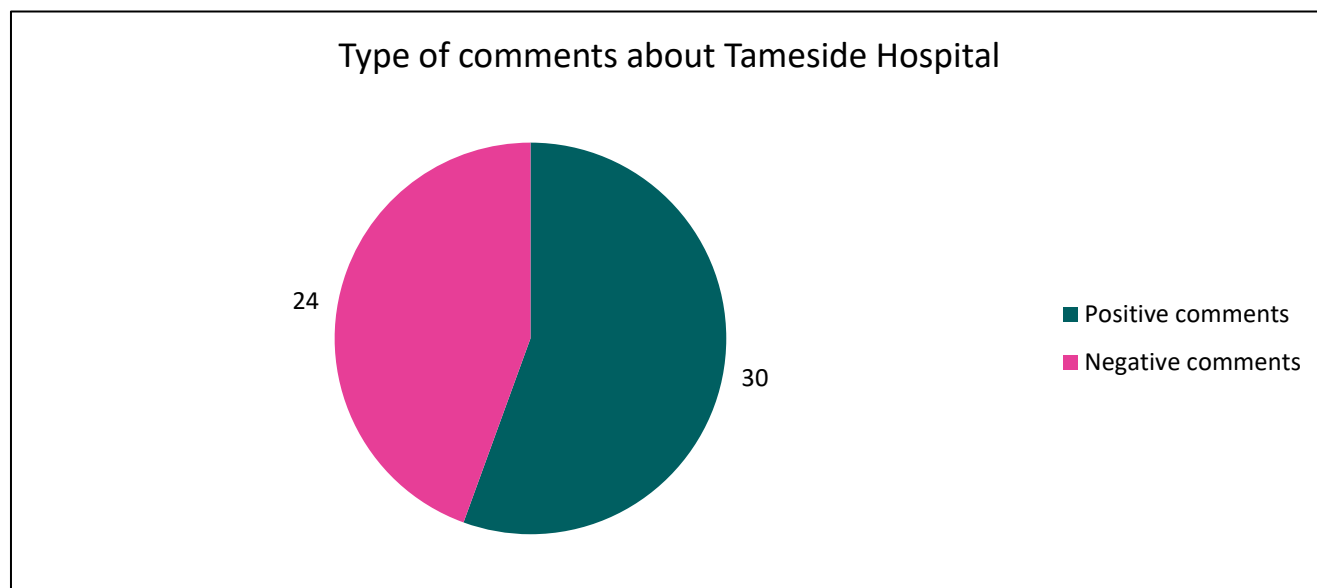
- Caring
- Efficient
- Like a military operation
- Quick
- Very good
- Well organised

People thought improvements could be made about:

- Long queues
- More assistance needed with testing kit
- More difficult for people to book if they don't have digital access
- Remember to consider people using public transport

## Hospitals

The feedback received about hospitals was both positive and negative, and some people experienced both. Most of the comments were about Tameside Hospital, as shown in the following graph.



Other hospitals mentioned included Fairfield Hospital, Manchester Eye Hospital, Salford Royal, The Christie, Wythenshawe Hospital, and a few comments about unspecified hospitals.

The comments for these hospitals combined were:

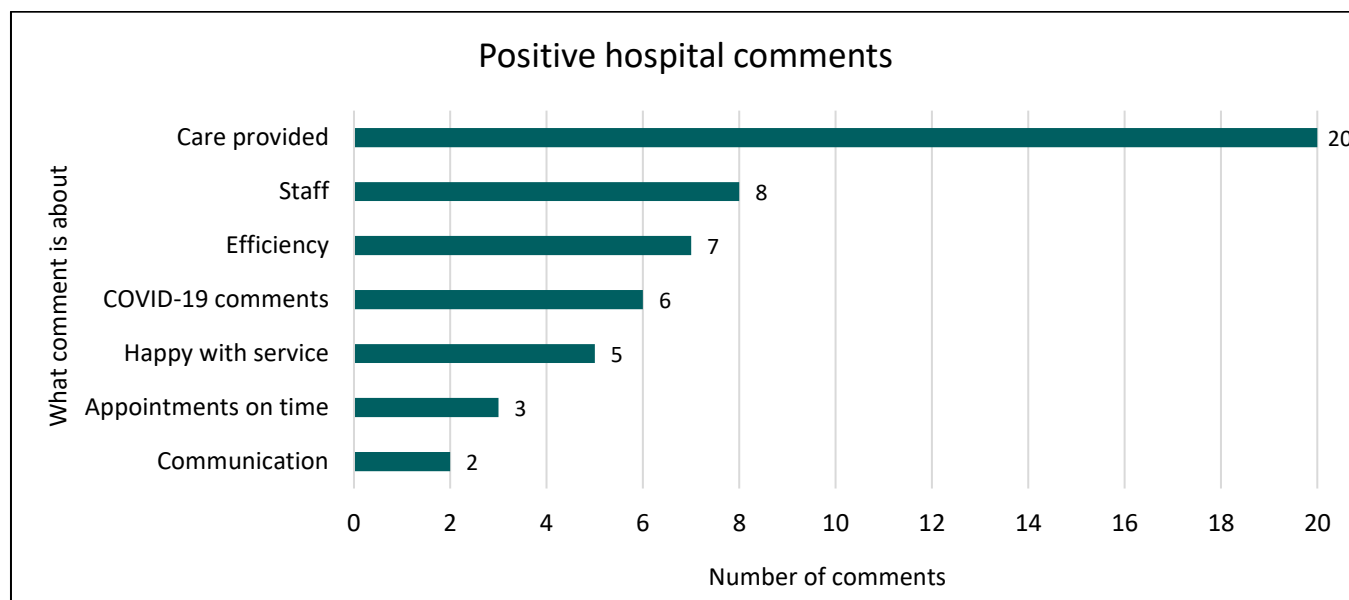
Positive - 8

Negative - 4

As with the GP practices, we will look at the themes of the comments for all hospitals.

## Positive comments

The following graph shows the themes which were mentioned in the survey responses.



Here are some of the comments from each theme:

- **Care provided:**

- Doctor had read notes
- Face-to-face appointments
- Felt well looked after
- Follow up appointment made
- Gave results of eye scan and will monitor
- Good NHS podiatry care
- Impressed
- Prompt treatment
- Thorough
- Urgent referral appointment
- Very good

A & E care was  
kind and patient

I was x rayed quickly  
and the nurse I  
eventually saw was  
thorough and kind

- **Staff:**

- Caring
- Fantastic
- Friendly
- Kind
- Lovely
- Patient
- Pleasant
- Polite
- Professional
- Reassuring
- Respectful

NHS chiropody were  
good in providing care  
for an ingrown toe  
nail.

- **Efficiency:**

- Efficient in diagnosing problem and referring for tests
- Saw me straight away and acted efficiently

GP, nurses, care staff and  
Consultants Team all very  
helpful, kind and understanding.  
They were offered excellent  
support and advice.

- **COVID-19 comments:**

- Carried out duties despite social distancing
- Carried out temperature checking
- COVID procedures work really well
- Doing a good job under the circumstances
- Good COVID safety measures

- **Happy with service:**

- Good
- Ok
- Satisfied
- Very good

- **Appointments on time:**
  - Didn't have to wait long
  - Prompt
  - Speedy service
- **Communication:**
  - Can see letters digitally
  - Clear explanations
  - Informed by text and letter
  - Opportunities to ask questions

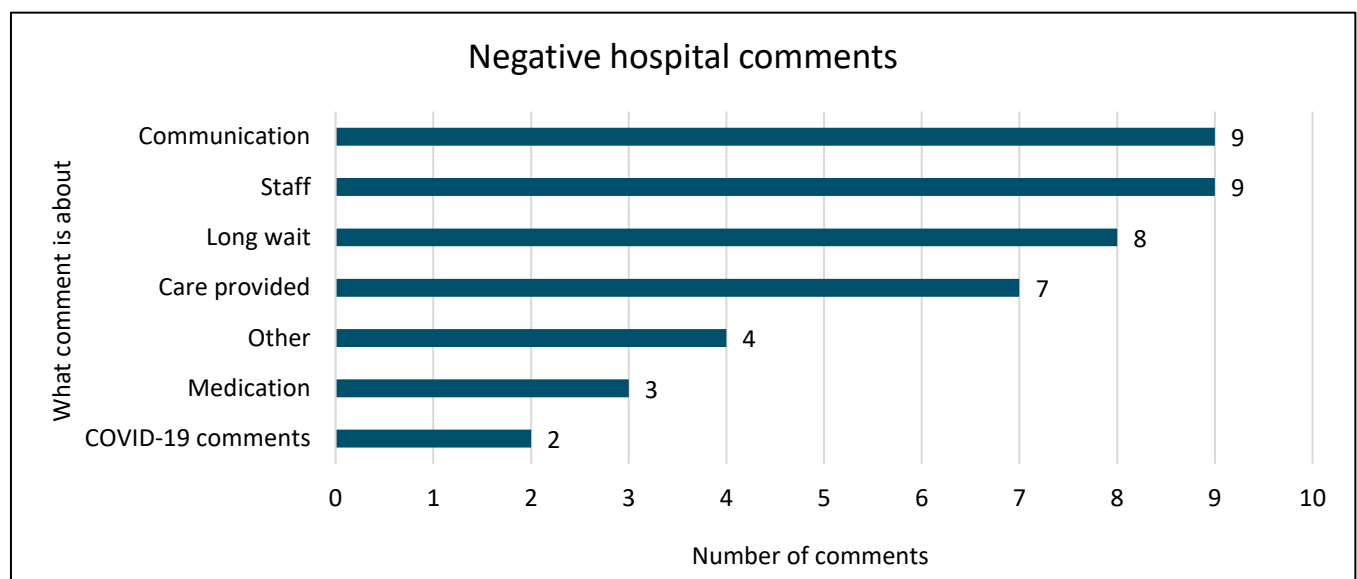
Urgent referral made by GP.  
Appointment 11 days later.  
Informed by text and letter. Clear explanation of investigations to be performed both in the letter and by the doctor. Risks explained.

Some people included details of the hospital department they had received care from in their positive responses. These included:

A and E, children's ward, dialysis, district nurses, eye clinic, maternity, outpatients (unspecified), physio, podiatry, urology, walk-in centre.

### Negative comments

We have collated the negative themes, which are shown in the next graph



Here are some of the comments from each theme, with suggestions for improvements:

- **Communication:**
  - Confusing multiple letters for the same appointment
  - Consultant dismissive in brief phone call
  - Hospital refusing to accept GP referral on paper
  - Listen more
  - Login screen directed to incorrect place
  - No information provided
  - Provide information about nearest walk-in centre
  - Referred to another service without telling us
  - Worried that text message about seeing letters digitally was a scam

Information/reassurance would have been greatly appreciated throughout what was a traumatic experience.

- **Staff:**

- Attitude
- Incompetent
- Lack of care
- Lack of compassion
- Lack of reassurance
- Lack of support
- More empathy
- More patience
- More understanding of needs required
- Rude
- Unhelpful

Some compassion for people waiting in pain and discomfort in A & E, pain relief being offered, being told how to access water (as the water coolers have been removed), more effort to keep the waiting room and toilets clean.

- **Long wait:**

- Further investigations needed after tests delayed for 10 months
- Having to wait for clinics to open to have surgery
- Kept waiting for hours
- Need quicker appointments
- Over 18 months wait for appointment
- Still waiting for heart scan
- Still waiting to hear about cancelled operation from October 2020
- Waited over 4 hours for transport home so rang taxi which was cancelled when it arrived

- **Care provided:**

- Can't check some conditions in a phone consultation
- Discharge poor
- Discharged without any support at home
- Have a face-to-face physical examination
- Improve patient care
- Originally given wrong diagnosis in phone consultation as condition needs to be diagnosed in person
- Walk-in centre couldn't help and sent back to GP (only went to walk-in as couldn't get GP appointment)
- Worse than when admitted a week before discharge and still don't know what is wrong

Do not really understand how you can do an eye consultation over the phone (especially as mine relates to high pressure in the eye).

- **Other:**

- Dark corridor to x-ray felt isolating in evening
- Do injections at GP instead of long journeys out of area to hospital
- Transport is a problem due to centralisation of services
- Trying to park is stressful

Some specialists should be more compassionate and understanding to people's situations, especially mine as I look healthy on the outside, but suffer terribly inside due to numerous conditions that absolutely ruin my life.

- **Medication:**
  - Dad discharged and not told medication had changed or what to do
  - Discharged with medication but no instructions
  - Given injections to administer without proper instructions
- **COVID-19 comments:**
  - As an inpatient suffered from ban on visiting
  - More measures should be in place

They gave me medication to take home without being told how to take the tablets. So I have not taken any of it. I'm not just taking medication when I don't know what they are for.

The areas of the hospitals mentioned in the negative survey responses include A & E, cardiology, ENT, gastroscopy, MacMillan nurse, maternity, mental health, ophthalmology, stroke ward, walk-in/urgent care centre, x-ray.

## NHS dental care

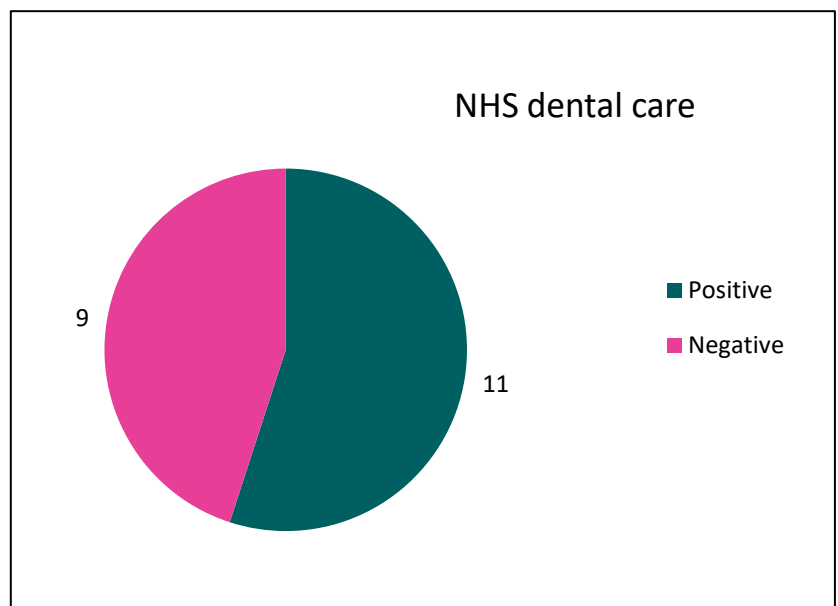
Although the question about services used (see page 4) specified use of NHS dentists, it is not clear from some of the comments whether these apply to NHS or private dentistry.

We have included all the comments in writing this report.

### Positive comments

These included:

- Continuing with extraction
- Easy to book
- Efficient
- Friendly
- Good COVID safety measures
- Good to get a check-up after a year
- Good treatment
- Prompt appointment times



The dental practices specifically named included:

First Dental, Glebe Street Dental Practice, Hyde Dental Practice, My Dentist (King Street, Dukinfield and Hyde), Pinfold Dental practice, Simply One dentist.



## Negative comments

These included:

- Had to go private which is expensive
- Long wait for emergency treatment
- Need to make allowances queuing outside for people who can't stand
- No appointments during COVID then removed from list
- No appointments for a year
- No follow-up care available after emergency treatment unless go private
- Not taking any more NHS patients this year
- Refused to put wife on waiting list
- Should be able to get NHS treatment
- Young child not allowed to use toilet

Waited week for emergency dentist appointment and then months for work. My mother charged 3 emergency appointments for same problem.

Some comments did not specify the dental practice. The dental practices that were named included:

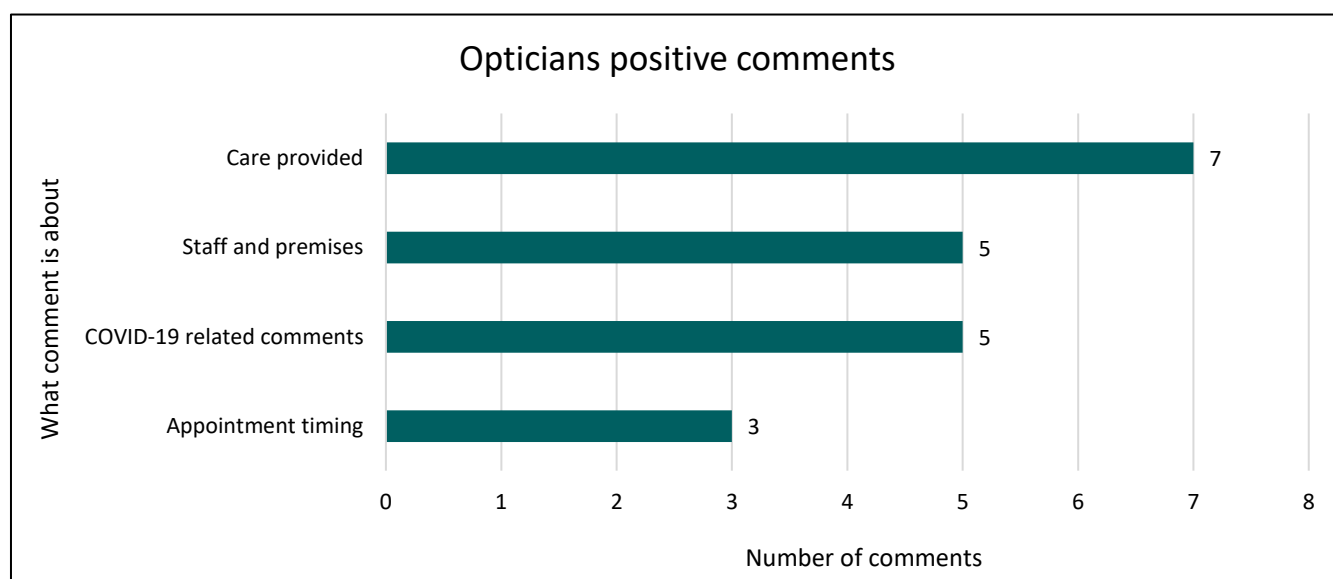
Glebe Street Dental Practice, Pinfold Dental practice, Simply One (Droylsden and Ashton).

## Opticians

All comments about eye care were positive (15 comments).

The only negative comment related to ear syringing, where a patient was sent to Specsavers. They wanted to charge £75, and there was a 5 week waiting list. The patient returned to the GP who arranged the syringing.

The next graph shows the themes the comments refer to.



The positive feedback within each of the themes includes:

- **Care provided:**
  - Diabetic eye screening very good
  - Good service
  - OK
  - Really good and do the old-fashioned tests
  - Referral to private facility for NHS care much shorter waiting time
  - Referred for cataract surgery
  - Thorough
- **Staff and premises:**
  - Clean
  - Friendly
  - Helpful
  - Polite
  - Reassuring
  - Respectful
  - Well run and managed
- **COVID-19 related comments:**
  - All doing their best at this time
  - Doing a good job under the circumstances
  - Everything COVID safe which made me feel comfortable
  - Followed COVID rules
- **Appointment timing:**
  - Efficient
  - Seen on time

The opticians named in the survey responses were:

Asda Hyde optician, Boots optician, Cartwright opticians, Morrisons optician, Muldoon and Tonge opticians, Specsavers.

## Pharmacies

There were 9 comments about pharmacies, all of them positive.

The themes mentioned included:

- COVID-safe
- Deliver to me
- Good service
- Great job under the (COVID) circumstances
- Helpful
- Well run and managed

The pharmacy was very helpful and delivered on time.

The pharmacies that were named were:

Asda, Boots (4 locations), Co-op, Primary Care Centre, Well Pharmacy (2 locations).

## Social care

There were two comments about social care provision, both positive and both related to home care.

Comments included:

- Being able to make contact (and get results)
- Friendly and efficient

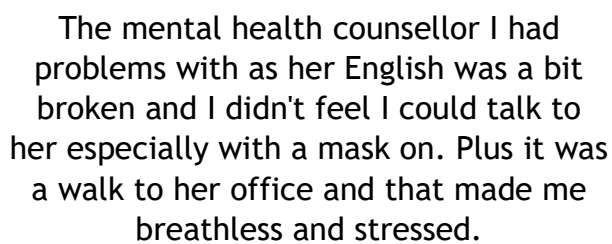
## Mental health care

There were two comments about provision of mental health care, one positive and one negative.

Positive:

- Carried out their duties despite COVID and social distancing

Negative:



The mental health counsellor I had problems with as her English was a bit broken and I didn't feel I could talk to her especially with a mask on. Plus it was a walk to her office and that made me breathless and stressed.

## Other comments

A few comments did not specify which health or care service they were talking about. These included:

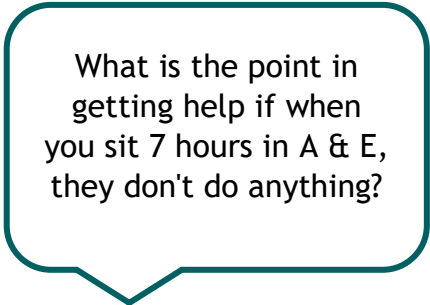
- Bus service stopped - will struggle to get to any future appointments.
- It has made me deal with things rather than seek assistance due to risk of COVID.
- Trying to stop smoking and also need to lose weight - the whole thing seems to be a mental challenge.
- Unused medications or dressings have to be thrown away.
- Wastage on documentation

## Delays asking for medical help

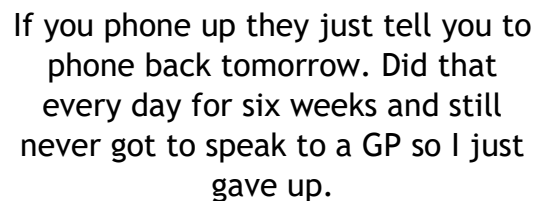
The final question on the survey asked about whether people had held back asking for help due to the COVID pandemic.

The types of care people said they had not asked for help with included:

- Asthma
- Cough
- Dental care
- Eye test (cataract surgery now required)
- Mental health
- Pain in leg
- Questions about medication
- Shoulder pain after fall
- Skin condition
- Smear test
- Suspect mole
- Suspected fibromyalgia
- Suspected thyroid problem



What is the point in getting help if when you sit 7 hours in A & E, they don't do anything?



If you phone up they just tell you to phone back tomorrow. Did that every day for six weeks and still never got to speak to a GP so I just gave up.

Not everyone explained why they had delayed asking for help. From the responses that did explain, the reasons given for delaying included:

- Just given up
- Leave appointments free for people with more urgent need
- No point as GPs not seeing people
- Scared to go to A & E because of the virus
- Too long to get through to the surgery

Some of these reasons were stated a number of times. Some people thought twice about contacting their GP but then decided they would.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who has supported Healthwatch Tameside in our work. This includes the people who complete our surveys, and the individuals and organisations who promote them.

We also thank our volunteers for the support they provide.